

## **Gazans break through Rafah crossing**

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Just minutes after a deadline passed for the border between Egypt to Gaza to be officially shut down, Palestinians have again broken through.

Palestinians broke another hole in the border fence with a bulldozer on Friday, and scores of trucks and pedestrians were seen entering into Egypt.

After the 3 pm (1300 GMT) deadline set for the closure, thousands of Gazans were still believed to be on the Egyptian side of the border in the town of Rafah.

The deadline was earlier announced over megaphones on Egyptian security vehicles driving around al-Arish and Egyptian Rafah.

Speaking from the Gaza side of the crossing, Al Jazeera's correspondent Jacky Rowland said the Rafah crossing is open to business.

"The crossing has become open again. Now the Egyptian police have pulled back and the crossing is open and operating again, people are continuing to go cross the border to buy household goods".

Egyptian security forces in full riot gear were deployed along the border in an attempt to prevent Palestinians crossing over to Egypt to stock up on supplies.

Egyptian troops, in green camouflage, bullet-proof vests and helmets and armed with clubs and plastic shields, formed human chains and rolled out barbed wire to prevent more Gazans from entering Egypt.

At the same time, Gazans were allowed back into the Strip, witnesses said.

Al Jazeera's Amr El Kahky, on the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing said there has been no confrontation between the Egyptian and Palestinians.

"The rules of engagement say no engagement. You can't beat the Palestinians or engage with crossfire with them. Egyptians will not use gunfire to deter Palestinians from trying to cross.

Egypt says the borders will inevitably seal, whether today or a few days later".

Israel in the meantime is on high security alert.

David Chater in Jerusalem said the opening demonstrates that Hamas is in control of the border.

"This will add to the dismay amongst the Israeli security establishment. They know the open border mean Palestinian resistance groups can infiltrate their fighters into Egypt. Israel is on a major security alert".

Egypt's decision to re-close the border followed pressure from the United States and Israel.

### **Human Wall**

Thousands of Palestinians, many of them carrying empty fuel canisters, managed to push through several openings despite the presence of the Egyptians deployed nine rows deep in some places.

At one point, guards aimed a water cannon above the heads of people, not at them, to keep them back. Cranes were positioned next to the border, lifting crates of supplies over into Gaza.

Egyptian forces took up positions a few steps into Palestinian territory, using shields to protect themselves from some Gazans who climbed atop car roofs and threw stones at them.

Violence erupted at the Rafah border after Cairo announced it would close the crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

Palestinians have been flocking into Egypt for three days for essential supplies following Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip.

The Egyptian government took heavy criticism from the west over the border opening.

Earlier the US congress suspended \$100 million of aid to Egypt due to the border breach.